

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

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CINCPAC

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LIMDIS

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS SN MY ID

SUBJ: PROPOSED POLICY REVIEW OF SINGAPORE PURCHASES OF
MILITARY EQUIPMENT

REF: (A) SINGAPORE 787, (B) KUALA LUMPUR 1014

1. WE THINK IT VERY UNLIKELY GOI WOULD CONSIDER SALES
OF LSTS, APCS, HELICOPTERS, OR ARTILLERY IN QUANTITIES
DESCRIBED REF (A) AS REPRESENTING ANY THREAT TO ITS OWN
SECURITY.,ALTHOUGH THERE MIGHT BE TWINGE OF ENVY AMONG
INDONESIAN MILITARY ON SEEING SINGAPORE ACQUIRE MODERN
ARMS IN QUNATITIES WHICH INDONESIA UNABLE AFFORD ITSELF OR
OBTAIN THROUGH MILITARY AID. IN GOI'S EYES, SINGAPORE,
SHORT OF ATTAINING NUCLEAR CAPABILITY, INHERENTLY TOO
VULNERABLE EVER TO CONSTITUTE MILITARY DANGER TO
INDONESIA.

2. GOI REACTION TO PROPOSED SALES WOULD
PROBABLY BE PRIMARILY DETERMINED BY ITS VIEW OF ITS SECURITY

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INTERESTS IN MALAYSIA AND BY GOM'S ATTITUDES. SUHARTO

GOVERNMENT DEFENSE THINKING ON MALAYSIA HAS BEEN AMBIVALENT. WHILE INDONESIA'S LEADERS FEEL A SPECIAL TIE WITH THEIR FELLOW MALAYS ON THE PENINSULA AND RECOGNIZE THAT MALAYSIAN TERRITORY IS OF STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE TO INDONESIA'S OWN DEFENSE, THEY HAVE BEEN WARY ABOUT MAKING MILITARY COMMITMENTS TO ASSIST GOM, PARTICULARLY THROUGH INVOLVEMENT OF INDONESIAN FORCES. NOTWITHSTANDING THEIR OWN DOMESTIC POLICIES TO CURB CHINESE ECONOMIC POWER, THEY HAVE NOT HESITATED TO ADVISE MALAYSIAN LEADERS TO EXERCISE MODERATION IN COMMUNAL RELATIONS. THERE MAY, IN FACT, BE PARALLELISM BETWEEN INDONESIAN AND SINGAPOREAN DEFENSE INTERESTS IN MALAYSIA. IT MIGHT BE ARGUED THAT INDONESIA WOULD SEE MERIT IN SINGAPOREAN BUILD-UP WHICH MIGHT HELP PREVENT COMPLETE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER IN MALAYSIA WERE THAT TO MATERIALIZE AS GENUINE THREAT.

3. NEVERTHELESS, RACIAL AND EMOTIONAL FACTORS COULD BE DETERMINING WHERE INDONESIAN ATTITUDES ARE CONCERNED. INDONESIAN SHARE WITH MALAYSIANS DEEP-ROOTED SUSPICION OF ALL CHINESE, AND THIS HAS BEEN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN CONTINUING UNDERCURRENT OF FRICTION BETWEEN JAKARTA AND SINGAPORE -- E.G., ON ASEAN FREE TRADE AREA, SINGAPOREAN UNGA VOTE IN TIMOR. IF MALAYSIANS WERE TO TAKE ALARM AT SINGAPOREAN ARMS PURCHASES, THEY MIGHT NOT FIND IT TOO DIFFICULT TO PERSUADE INDONESIANS THAT PERFIDIOUS CHINESE IN SINGAPORE WERE SCHEMING TO INTERVENE IN MALAYSIA IN SUPPORT OF CHINESE COMMUNITY THERE.

4. IN SUMMARY, WE THINK GOM ATTITUDES ARE LIKELY TO BE THE KEY FACTOR IN ANY REGIONAL REVERBERATIONS STEMMING FROM ARMS SALES TO SINGAPORE. IF THERE IS ADVERSE REACTION IN INDONESIA, IT WILL MOST LIKELY BE IN RESPONSE TO MALAYSIAN ALARM.
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